serving the nation? Are we doing that? Are we not expected to fill those vacancies which arose due to the death of those persons while discharging their duties? Doesn't the country have any concern for them? The entire House and all the parties will support you. You go before the Cabinet, bring an amendment and even the Supreme Court has to agree to that.

SHRI RAM JETHMALANI: Sir, I do not think I an seriously persuade my Cabinet to violate the Constitution knowingly and intentionally. That is not possible. I do not propose to do it. However great the respect I have for my friend, I have greater respect for Dr. Ambedkar's Constitution. Dr. Ambedkar's Constitution says that you must have the rule of equality. The Supreme Court has further emphasised that mere compassion is not enough. The Government or the appointing authority is bound to carefully investigate into the means of that particular family. Only when it is found to be a case of absolute indigence, that there is no other source of livelihood possible, then alone can a compassionate appointment be made. Even when we got that ruling, even when the Lt. Governor modified the existing practice, the whole of the year, 1998, was wasted. Well, I call it "wasted", but it was actually spent in investigating into the financial means of every particular family. It was only when we found that the Supreme Court judgement was satisfied, nineteen appointments were made. I regret that this number is awfully small. It should have been a larger number. But, Sir, the speed will now pick up and, maybe, within the limitations that I have, I will be able to make many more appointments. But be sure, I will think seriously of finding some way of persuading the Supreme Court to relax the principles.

Functioning of Science Advisory Committee

*262. SHRI LAKKHIRAM AGARWAL: Will the Minister of STEEL AND MINES be pleased to state:

(a) the present Constitution and functioning of the Science Advisory Committee of his Ministry and its deliberations during the last two years;

(b) the specific recommendations made by the Committee, particularly relating to the propagation and development of technology, research & development in the iron and steel industry and other aspects during each of the last two years and the steps taken by the Government; and

(c) the current status of Research & Development in the Indian Steel sector and separately in the public sector steel plants in terms of facilities, expenditure and move to reduce costing etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL AND MINES (SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK): (a) to (c) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

(a) The Science Advisory Committee attached to Ministry of Steel and Mines, Department of Steel has not met during 1997 and 1998. It has been wound up on 14.10.98.

Cabinet approval has been obtained on 19.7.1997 to spend upto Rs. 150 crore anually from interest proceeds of Steel Development Fund (SDF) for Research & Development in Iron and Steel Sector. In place of Science Advisory Committee, an empowered Committee has been constituted on 24.2.1998. The present Constitution and terms of reference of the Empowered Committee are as follows:

1. Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Steel and Mines, Department of Steel. — Chairman
2. Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Science and — Member

	Technology, Department of Science and Technology.	
3.	Secretary to the Government of India, Ministry of Science and Technology, Deptt. of Scientific and Industrial Research.	Member
4.	Chairman, Steel Authority of India Ltd.	Member
5.	Managing Director, Tata Iron and Steel Company Limited	Member
6.	Chairman-cum-Managing Director, Metallurgical and Engineering Consultants (India) Limited, Ranchi.	Member
7.	Head, Department of Metallurgical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur.	Member
8.	Director, National Metallurgical Laboratory, Jameshdpur.	Member
9.	Development Commissioner for Iron & Steel and Secretary, SDF Managing Commitee, Calcutta.	Member
10.	Joint Secretary to Government of India, Ministry of Steel and Mines, Department of Steel, (dealing SDF Matters).	Member
12.	Adviser, Planning Commission.	Member
13.	Scientific Adviser to Defence Minister, Government of India.	Permanent Invitee
14.	Director, Research and Technology Mission.	Member Secretary

Research and Technology Mission which will work as the secretariat of the Empowered Committee is being formed.

Terms of Reference of the Empowered Committee:

(i) Examiune all aspects of Science and Technology in the Iron and Steel Sector.

(ii) Co-ordinate the on-going research programmes in the iron & steel sector (both in public & private sectors) and monitor their progress.

(iii) Evaluate and decide upon the research proposals placed before it for fully or partly funding from the interest accruals from the Steel Development Fund.

(iv) Review, periodically, the progress of Science and Technology programmes of national importance in the Iron & Steel industry.

(v) Advise Ministry of Steel on the policies and programmes which need to be pursued in developing domestic capabilities in scientific and technological research, development of design engineering and products.

(b) The Empowered Committee has met twice since its formation. The Committee has approved five research proposals in the first meeting on 10.7.98 and nine research proposals in the 2nd meeting held on 23.2.1999. The approved proposals (from both private and public sector) cover the areas of improvement of energy efficiency, mining and beneficiation of ores, improvement of characteristics of coal, refractories, steel and development of on line expert software systems.

(c) Steel Plants both in Private & Public Sectors pursue Research and Development activities to deal with their plant specific problems, and to assimilate and innovate newer technologies, utilise Indian minerals and raw materials in larger proportion, reduce pollution, conserve energy and reduce cost of production.

During 1997-98 Indian Steel industries spent about Rs. 72 crore on Research and Development out of which Rs. 57 crore was spent by the public sector undertakings (PSUs).

The steel producers have taken several measures to reduce production costs. Steps taken by SAIL to reduce production costs and to improve performance include

—Modernisation and technological upgradation of its plants.

—improved quality, product-mix and production in line with market requirements.

—improving techno-economic factors viz. reduction in coke rate, energy consumption, metallic input, improvement in yield etc.

—improving availability of equipment through effective maintenance.

—strict control and reduction in cost of production.

श्री लक्खीराम अग्रवाल: सभापति महोदय, मंत्री जी ने अपने उत्तर में बताया है कि इस संबंध में जो विज्ञान सलाहकार समिति बनाई थी, वह भंग कर दी गई है और अधिकार प्राप्त समिति बनाई गई है। मैं मंत्री जी से जानना चाहूंगा कि क्या अधिकार प्राप्त समिति ने इस बात पर विचार किया है कि जो हमारा इस्पात उद्योग है, उनके उत्पादन का वर्तमान शुल्क और उत्पादन ढांचा क्या देशी इस्पात उद्योग के अनुकूल है? मेरी जानकारी के अनुसार इस्पात के आयात और निर्यात शुल्क में काफी अंतर होता है। इस संबंध में पिछले 2 वर्षों के निर्यात मूल्य और आयात मूल्य की जानकारी अगर मंत्री जी को हो, तो वह मुझे देने का कष्ट करें।

SHRI NAVIN PATNAIK: Sir, in reply to the hon. Member's question I would like to point out that this requires a separate notice, if the hon. Member can understand, as pricing is not an issue to be discussed.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Any other supplementary?

श्री लक्खीराम अग्रवाल: सभापति महोदय, सम्बन्ध तो इसी से ही है, क्योंकि अधिकार प्राप्त समिति बनाई है और मैंने विज्ञान सलाहकार समिति के बारे में पूछा था। उन्होंने कहा है कि इसको भंग करके और अधिकार प्राप्त समिति.... **(व्यवधान)**

श्री सभापति: वह तो आप रिपीट कर रहे हैं, आप दूसरा प्रश्न करें।

श्री लक्खीराम अग्रवाल: मेरा दूसरा प्रश्न यह है कि वर्तमान इस्पात संकट को देखते हुए क्या राउरकेला, भिलाई, दुर्गापुर और विशाखापत्तनम में इस्पात मूल्य को कम करने के लिए, लागत मूल्य को कम करने के लिए सरकार कोई कदम उठा रही है और क्या राउरकेला, भिलाई और दुर्गापुर में तैयार माल और टाटा स्टील जो एक प्राईवेट उद्योग है उनके तैयार माल के लागत मूल्य में अंतर है?

SHRI NAVIN PATNAIK: Sir, in reply to the hon. Member's question, the investment made in research and development area by the private and public steel sectors, during the last three years is around Rs. 72 crores/Yr. In the year 1997-98, the Steel Authority of India spent more than Rs. 47 crores in research and development; Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd. spent about Rs. 2 crores; National Development Corporation of India spent about Rs. 4.86 crores; KUDREMUKH Iron Ore Co. Ltd. spent about Rs. 2 crores; Maganese Ore India Ltd. spent about Rs. 85 lakh and Sponge Iron India Ltd. spent about Rs. 6 lakh. Sir, the cost of production of PSUs and private producers is not comparable.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Sh. R.K. Malaviya.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the main reply. The question is on the functioning of Science Advisory Committee; addressed to the Ministry of Steel and Mines. The Minister, in his reply, is saying that the Committee has been abolished. Then, is he bothering about it, when it has been abolished. Why is he bothered about the Empowered Committee? Is it his contention that the Empowered Committee is the substitute for the Science Advisory Committee? Then, he should have clearly explained it is the

text of the answer itself. He himself has stated in the first part of his statement that the Science Advisory Committee has been abolished. Is it his contention that the Empowered Committee is the substitute for the Science Advisory Committee? This is because the question relates to the Science Advisory Committee.

SHRI NAVIN PATNAIK: Sir, in reply to the hon. Member's question, I have a sheet of paper with me. The earlier Committee, which has now been abolished, had 26 Members, but a large number of Members also...

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: I am not putting a question. My point is; he has said that it has been abolished...

SHRI NAVIN PATNAIK: Sir, I am trying....

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: It means, the earlier Committee has been substituted by the Empowered Committee. Is the Empowered Committee a substitute for the Science Advisory Committee, or are you going to appoint the Science Advisory Committee at some later stage. You simply answer this question.

SHRI NAVIN PATNAIK: Sir, in reply to the hon. Member's question....

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Sir, I am not putting any supplementary. I am drawing the attention of the Chairman to the incoherent part of his reply.

SHRI NAVIN PATNAIK: Sir, I am trying...

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Please, Sir, you give your opinion. I am not seeking any clarification from him. My question is, whether this is relevant. I raise it as a point of order. If you look at the question, you find that the question is relating to the Science Advisory Committee. "The present Constitution and functioning of the Science Advisory Committee of his Ministry."

The hon. Minister says that the Science Advisory Committee attached to the Ministry of Steel and Mines, Department of Steel, has not met recently. Then he has said that it has been abolished. Whether the Empowered Committee has been constituted in place of the Scientific Advisory Committee? Then there would be no Science Advisory Committee.

MR. CHAIRMAN: It means so.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: In reply to the extremely distinguished hon. Member, Shri Pranab Mukherjee's question for clarification, Sir, the Science Advisory Committee has been replaced by the Empowered Committee.... (*Interruptions*) May I be permitted to reply? (*Interruptions*)

SHRI T.N. CHATURVEDI: It is implicit. He is clarifying it now.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: The Empowered Committee has replaced the Science Advisory Committee because the SAC was to be reconstituted to make it function better. Thank you, Sir..

श्री राधाकिशन मालवीय: सभापति महोदय, मैं माननीय इस्पात मंत्री जी से जानना चाहता हूं कि इस्पात विभाग से संबंधित जो विज्ञान सलाहकार समिति थी, उसको सरकार ने भंग कर दिया। मेरा पहला प्रश्न यह है कि भंग करने के कारण क्या थे और दूसरा उसकी जगह जो अधिकार-प्राप्त समिति गठित की गई, उससे हमारे यहां गुणवत्ता आई और कई कारण उसके इसमें बताए हैं और इस समिति ने वर्ष 1995-96 में 72 करोड़ रुपया खर्च किया। तो मैं सरकार से यह जानना चाहता हूं कि इस्पात उद्योग में कोई अनुसंधान उन्होंने किया और यदि किया है तो हमारे देश में जो कच्चा लोहा है, जो बहुत मात्रा में पाया जाता है, उस पर अनुसंधान करके अच्छी क्वालिटी का इस्पात बनाने का कोई निर्णय सरकार ने लिया है?

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, in reply to the first part of the hon. Member's question, the Science Advisory Committee attached to the Department of Steel was formed on the 1st of September, 1984, and it was wound up on 14th October, 1998. The Science

Advisory Committee was too big in size, and it was difficult for all to attend frequent meetings. The Empowered Committee is much smaller in size, and it is expected that it will be able to meet frequently....

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE: Has it met even once after it was constituted in 1988?

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: If you will allow me to reply,... (*Interruptions*)

SHRI T.N. CHATURVEDI: The new Committee is functionally more effective now.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, in reply to the second part of the hon. Member's question, the expenditure incurred for Research and Development for the Department of Steel, Ministry of Steel and Mines, is met from the Steel Development Fund. The amount of grant or loan made available from the Steel Development Fund for Research and Development in the field of steel during the last four years is as follows. In 1995-96, it was Rs. 50 lakhs; in 1996-97, it was nil; in 1997-98, it was Rs. 4 lakhs, and in 1998-99, up to the 31st of December, 1998, it was Rs. 32 lakhs. In the field of Science and Technology, the amount spent in 1995-96 was nil; in 1996-97, it was about Rs. 19 lakhs; in 1997-98, it was around Rs. 15 lakhs, and in 1998-99, up to the 31st of December of 1988, it was around Rs. 90 lakhs.

DR. RAJA RAMANNA: The Minister has said that this Science Advisory Committee had a very large number of members. I would like to draw the Minister's attention to the fact that the Science Advisory Committee to the Cabinet had sent a note to the Cabinet saying that no semi-technical committee should have more than seven people. Now, I repeat this because it was decided by the first Science Advisory Committee of the Cabinet Several years ago as to how many members there should be on committees which have to implement decisions. From the statement, I note that Science Advisory Committee of the Steel industry had 22 members and it has been reduced to 10, 14. I find that the terms of reference are so broad that no effective decision can be taken unless this is broken up into further details. Of course, many people can be consulted. But, with 14 people, all busy Secretaries to Government, and various officials, examining all aspects of science and technology, co-ordinating all on going research, is quite an impossibility. The Minister should perhaps try to revise the terms of reference that is given here. This is my suggestion.

SHRI NAVEEN PATNAIK: Sir, I will, certainly, consider the suggestions of the hon. Member.

राजस्थान और महाराष्ट्र में छुआछूत

*263. **श्री जनेश्वर मिश्र: क्या सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता** मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि हमारे देश के अधिकांश हिस्सों में, विशेषकर राजस्थान और महाराष्ट्र में अब भी छूआछूत विद्यमान है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो क्या आज भी देश के कई हिस्सों में छोटी जातियों के लोगों को ढंग से बारात तक नहीं ले जाने देते है और ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में चाय-पान की दुकानों में उनके लिए अलग वर्तन रखे जाते है, और

(ग) यदि हां, तो सरकार इस घिनौनी प्रथा को समाप्त करने हेतु क्या कदम उठा रही है?

सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय की राज्य मंत्री (श्रीमती मेनका गांधी): (क) जी, नहीं। राज्य सरकारों तथा संघ राज्य क्षेत्रों से उपलब्ध सूचना के अनुसार, वर्ष 1996 और 1997 के दौरान राजस्थान के छुट-पुट मामलों को छोड़कर देश के अधिकांश क्षेत्रों में छूआछूत विद्यमान नहीं है।

(ख) राजस्थान राज्य को छोड़कर अन्य किसी राज्य सरकार / संघ क्षेत्र प्रशासन ने ऐसे किसी दृष्टांत के बारे में सूचित नहीं किया है।

(ग) संविधान के अनुच्छेद 17 के अंतर्गत अस्पृश्यता वर्जित है। सिविल अधिकार संरक्षण अधिनियम, 1955 में पर्याप्त कानूनी सहायता, अभियोजन संबंधी कार्रवाई शुरू करने अथवा पर्यवेक्षण करने